

# Raising Up Leaders in Your Small Group

*I have led small groups for over 20 years. The thing I look back on is not the groups I have led but the leaders I have developed, especially those who are effectively mentoring others. I count church leaders, pastors, and full-time missionary church planters among the people I have had the privilege of mentoring. Their ministry has continued long after I have moved on to new areas of ministry.*

–Dave Earley

## Leaving a Legacy

- **Read Ephesians 4:11-13.** As a pastor/teacher in your small group, one of your primary goals as a small group leader is to raise up new leaders and “equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.” Ask yourself this question (and answer honestly!): “If I were to disappear from my small group, would my small group disappear as well?”
  - Is there a leadership vacuum in your small group?
  - Can you name three, two, or even one person in your small group that could effectively lead your group if you took yourself out of the picture completely?
- We get so caught up in the urgency of “doing ministry” that we fail to mentor leaders, an absolutely critical area of discipleship. *Mentoring and raising up leaders to lead future small groups is a priority and a non-negotiable for effective small group leaders.*
- Developing leaders is the ultimate form of discipleship. Our vision should not just be to make disciples, but to make generations of disciples who are making disciples. By investing the time in your apprentice’s life, discipling them, and developing in them a passion and desire to be a disciple maker, you are sowing seeds of leadership that will exponentially multiply in their lives and in the lives of others.
- **Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2:2 (NIV).** Paul addresses four generations of leaders here: Paul (*me*), Timothy (*you*), Timothy’s apprentices (*reliable men*), and the apprentices of Timothy’s apprentices (*others*). Paul understood that in ministry, there is no lasting success without a successor! When Paul was martyred, his ministry did not die with him, but actually flourished and grew because the believers he mentored and disciplined (Timothy, Silas, Titus, etc.) stepped right in and carried on his work and ministry!

**Stop & Think:** Do you currently have an apprentice or a leadership core in your small group or is the leadership resting solely on your shoulders?

# Finding and Raising an Apprentice – The Preliminary Stages

## Pray

- Some people say they can't find an apprentice... if that is your response, then I guarantee you have not brought this subject to the Lord in prayer. God has a way of always revealing who your apprentice should be (it may be surprising who it is sometimes!) when we bathe that decision in prayer.
- "Leadership development is first and foremost a divine task. Prayer touches the heart of God and changes our own hearts. It produces within us a constant watchfulness for potential leadership. Prayer gives us God's perspective and erases our own preconceived notions." -Joel Comiskey

## Discover

- Who shows up on a consistent basis? Who volunteers when you ask for help regarding your group? Who shows up early to pray for your small group before it even begins? If you don't already, start throwing out responsibilities and see who responds. This kind of faithfulness and commitment to your small group is the key aspect of an apprentice.  
*The best leaders and the ones willing to work for the success of the group.*

***Joel Comiskey, a small groups church planter, studied 700 effective small group leaders in eight distinct cultures and "discovered that the potential to lead a growing, successful small group does not reside with the gifted, the educated, or those with vibrant personalities. The answer, rather, is hard work."***

## Go Deep

- You need to spend time with your apprentices and get to know them as a person and a friend. Here are a few examples of things you can do to go deep with your apprentices:
  - Pray Together – This reveals your heart to them and theirs to yours
  - Play Together – "Waste time" together. Spend time with them outside of ministry settings by sharing meals, hanging out, going to sporting events, etc.
  - Vision Cast Together – Let them in on your vision of your small group, the vision of multiplication, the vision of making disciples, and the vision of First Assembly. Casting vision is a critical step because people won't give themselves fully to a program, but will lay down their lives for a vision.

*"If you aren't willing to get truly close to a few people for Christ then you will not have the full impact that is vital for discipleship." -Bill Hull*

# Jesus – The Master of Mentoring and Apprenticeship

The next steps of raising an effective leader in your small group were also the key to the success of Jesus' ministry. He relied *entirely* on His ability to raise up, mentor, and disciple future leaders to complete the work and ministry that He started... so how did He do it?

- **He modeled.** Jesus disciples' spent time watching Him do ministry (**Matthew 9:32-38**). Let your apprentices first see a highly effective small group leader in action. (Most of what your apprentices learn will be caught not officially taught.)
- **He mentored.** Jesus allowed His disciples to minister while He watched, assisted, corrected, and encouraged them along the way (**Matthew 10:1**). Follow this model in the small group meeting by letting your apprentice lead parts of the small group, like worship, leading a prayer group, or doing the teaching. Outside of the group, disciple and train them to seek the Lord, contact and follow up with members, pray for your small group, prepare for small group, teach your small group, and other aspects of being an effective small group leader that they need to experience before they go out on their own.
- **He motivated.** Jesus released His disciples to go and do ministry without Him being right there, encouraging them from a distance (**Matthew 10:5**). Let your apprentices "take over" the small group from start to finish until they are proficient enough to lead the entire evening without you assisting or chiming in when they get stuck. Or you may let them take half of the small group into another part of the house and lead that group for the night. Meet with your apprentice after small group and assess the evening – what they did right and what they could work on. The best small group leaders rarely lead. They are constantly encouraging and training apprentices to lead for them!
- **He multiplied.** Jesus replicated Himself into the 12 disciples (**Matthew 10:2-4**), who in turn became 70 (**Luke 10:1**), then to perhaps 500 (**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:6**), to 3,000 (**Acts 2:41**), which has exponentially increased to the number of disciples today! Just like Jesus' ministry model, we must constantly be looking to reproduce ourselves in our apprentices and be ready and willing to send those apprentices out to lead a small group on their own! Multiplication is a sign of healthy, vibrant, and growing small group!

## Timeline for Apprenticeship

- There is no real set timetable for raising up an apprentice. Some apprentices will learn and grow much faster than others. The important thing is to *cultivate the skills they will need to succeed as a small group leader*, which will vary (sometimes drastically!) from person to person. To ensure your apprentice has a firm grasp on *all* aspects of leading a small group, I would recommend mentoring (starting with the "Go Deep" section on page 2 and into the Jesus model of mentoring) them for a minimum of 3 months.